

BOOK REVIEW

DENI BOWN. 2000. **Aroids: Plants of the Arum family (ed. 2)**. (ISBN 0-88192-485-7, hbk.). Timber Press, 133 SW Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, U.S.A. (Orders: www.timberpress.com, 800-327-5680, 503-227-2878, 503-227-3070 fax). \$34.95, 468 pp, 108 color photos, 50 line drawings, 6" × 9".

Contents.—Foreword to the Second Edition, Peter C. Boyce; Foreword to the First Edition, Simon Mayo; Preface; Acknowledgments; Introduction.

1. Variations on a theme: What are aroids and where do they grow?
2. Of tails and traps and the underworld: Mechanisms of reproduction.
3. Woodlanders: Species of temperate woodland and higher altitudes of the tropics and subtropics.
4. Aquatics and Amphibians: Species of wetlands and water.
5. A place in the sun: Species of arid and seasonally dry regions.
6. In the shadows: Species of the tropical rainforest floor.
7. Towards the light: Tropical climbers and epiphytes.
8. The titans: Giant tuberous species of the tropics.
9. An acquired taste: Aroids as food plants.
10. Acids and crystals: The chemistry and toxicity of aroids.
 - Aroids in cultivation (with detailed notes on how to do it, arranged by genus and species).
 - Checklist of aroid genera (concise overview of classification, with number of species, distribution, habit, and ecology for each genus).
 - Glossary
 - References
 - Index

It's an amazing family—so much structural diversity and so much biological diversity—with about 109 genera and 3200 species. Philodendron (*Philodendron*), anthurium (*Anthurium*), green dragon and jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema*), dumb cane (*Dieffenbachia*), duckweeds (*Lemna* and relatives), monstera (*Monstera*), pothos (*Pothos* and relatives), caladium (*Caladium*), golden-club (*Orontium*), skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus*), calla (*Calla*), taro (*Colocasia*), water lettuce (*Pistia*), cryptocoryne and lagenandra (*Cryptocoryne* and *Lagenandra*), titan arum (*Amorphophallus*), arum lily (*Zantedeschia*). ... even those with only a passing interest in horticulture know most of these names. And even the inside-oriented see these plants in aquaria, malls, and shady, highly tamed gardens. "Sweet flag" is out of the family (*Acorus calamus*, "The Aroid that never was," pp. 124-126) but still given discussion; the duckweeds are in (*Lemna* et al., "Deceptively delicate drifters," pp. 100-102).

The new edition of Bown's "Aroids" conveys so much interesting information with as much clarity and wit as anything botanical I've ever read. The beautiful photos are integral. The author intends the book as a general introduction to the family, "readable rather than only referable" but "sufficiently informative to attract enthusiasts who already grow these remarkable subjects," and as an offering "for all those who find structure and design in nature an endless fascination." You may want one copy for yourself, one for a friend, and one for the local public school library. *The Genera of Araceae* (S.J. Mayo et al. 1997, Kew Gardens) is more technical and more technically organized but a natural companion to the Bown volume.—Guy L. Nesom, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.